

he steps upon the ice. As he does so, he is recognized.

The fearless, saucy little face, the wide-open eyes, the curling hair, no less than the high-bred air of the child, and the manner in which he is attired, all combine to make Muiraven recognize his son, and as he does so, and realizes his probable danger, an anxious dread which has never had covert there before, rises up in his heart and makes him feel that he is a father. Without a moment's hesitation, he leaps over the field-gate, and runs through the grass to save the child. But Tommy is not to be outdone. He sees that he is pursued, guesses his sport is to be spoilt, and, with all the energy that has characterized the Norham blood for so many generations past, determines that he will not be punished for nothing. One slide he will have first—one delicious, dangerous slide, as he has seen the boys of the village take down the frozen gutters; so, running defiantly on to the forbidden playground, he sets his darling little legs as wide apart as possible, and goes gallantly down the pond—only for about a hundred yards, however, when, meeting with some obstacle, his equilibrium is disturbed; he tumbles head over heels, and in another moment is floundering among the broken ice. Muiraven, arrived at the brink of the pond, with all the haste he can walk straight in after him, crushing and dispersing the ice right and left as he goes.

The water is not deep, and the child is easily recovered, but as Muiraven brings him to the bank he is frightened to perceive he does not stir.

His eyes are closed, his mouth is half open, and from a cut across his forehead the blood is trickling down his face in a thin red stream.

The father's heart stands still.

What is the matter? What on earth should have occasioned this? Can he be dead?

He folds the boy closer in his arms as the horrible thought strikes him, and hurries onward to the village. The dripping state of Tommy's clothes and his own nether garments, wet up to the thighs, excite the curiosity of the Cockleburians, and he is soon surrounded by a little crowd of men and women all ready and anxious to direct him to Irene's lodgings.

"Is there a doctor here?" he demands hurriedly.

"Bless you, no, sir. We've no parish doctor nearer than the town; and he only comes over Mondays and Thursdays."

"Run on, then—any of you—as quick as you

can to Mrs. Mordaunt, and tell her to have hot water and blankets ready for the child."

In his anxiety for Tommy's well-doing, Muiraven does not consider the agony with which his intelligence will be received by Irene, and half a dozen villagers, eager for a reward, tear helter-skelter into Mrs. Wells's presence, to tell her "the young gentleman's been drowned, and she's to get a hot bath ready to put him in."

Irene, who is getting fidgety about the child's continued absence, is standing in the staircase when the message is delivered. It strikes upon her heart like a bolt of ice.

"What!" she says in a voice of horror. "What?"

"Oh, my dear lady, don't take on!" exclaims Mrs. Wells, wringing her hands and "taking on," herself as much as is possible on so short a notice; "but the poor dear child has got hisself in the pond, they're a-bringing him 'ome to 'you. Lord a' mercy! but here they are!"

Irene does not scream—she does not even speak; but all the color forsakes her face as she stands there for a moment, with her hand pressed on her heart, as though, till that chooses to go on again, she could neither think nor act. Then she makes one or two feeble steps forward to meet Muiraven, who comes quickly up the narrow, creaking staircase with the boy in his arms.

"Give—give—" she says faintly, as she encounters him, and, without a word of explanation, she presses his unconscious burden to her breast.

She carries it, slowly but firmly, to the light, and then sinks down upon the floor in a kneeling posture, with the child stretched across her knees.

"Oh, my lamb!—my own lamb!" she cries, in a voice of anguish that might pierce the heavens, "*no one has the power to take you from me now!*"

And Muiraven, standing by her, hears the words.

"Mamma," says Tommy, languidly, as though in answer to her appeal—"don't cry, mamma."

Irene stares at the child. His eyes are open—a faint color is returning to his lips—he is once more conscious. She screams with joy.

"He is not dead!" with rapid utterance.

"Who said he was drowned? Look!—he smiles—he speaks to me.—Oh! my child—my baby—my own darling! God could not have had the heart to take you away."

And thereupon she reeks him backward and forward violently in her arms, and cries a plentiful shower of tears above him that relieves her excited brain.